

## Excerpts from the Chronicle of Michael the Great, Patriarch of the Syrians, about Islamic History and Religion



13th century Armenian translation of Michael the Syrian Chronicle, manuscript of 1432.

[15] In the 60th year of Abraham [g23], [Abraham] and his father Terah and Nahor his brother and Lot son of Haran arose and left Ur'ha of the Chaldeans and came and came and dwelled in Harran for 14 years. At God's command Abraham arose and went and dwelled in the land of Canaan. When Abraham was 85 years of age he went to Egypt and fathered Ishmael by his maidservant Hagar. Ishmael was 138 in the 60th year of Jacob.

Abraham was 75 years of age when God again commanded him to go to the land of Canaan. He left his clan in Harran. Some say that he had a wife other than Sarah and a son named Ovrete', who did not want to accompany him. But [Abraham], unswerving to the command of the Almighty, arose and departed. However, there is a lack of certainty in the narration, since his father begat him at the age of 70 and died at 205. Step'annos says that it was after his father's death that he moved, when Abraham was 75 years old. This is a surprising [assertion] since Abraham was 135 years of age [at the time]. The Samaritan [version] correctly states that Terah was 70 years of age when he fathered Abraham, and that he lived for an additional 75 years. Moreover, some say that Sarah was descended from Eok'an, and a daughter of Haran. But how could Haran have been Sarah's father, ten years earlier, when Scripture clearly notes that Abraham was ten years older than Sarah? We believe that the way we have reckoned [this chronology] is correct. After Abraham had come into the land of the Caananites, he entered Egypt when he was 85 years of age. There he fathered Ishmael from the Egyptian woman Hagar. Sarah was untouched by Pharaoh so that she could bear [a son] like unto Our Lord, from a chaste womb.

[17] During this period, Semiramis was levelling the ground in Assyria [or, Asia] because of floods. Some claim that Abraham was involved with this labor. This was also the era of the [birth of the] kingdom of the Sicyonians. Similarly, a certain Kre's ruled as king over the Cretans, giving his name to that country; and Pyrrha, also called Peloponnese, [ruled and] gave his name to that country. Ishmael was born when Abraham was 88 years of age. The Arabs, Saracens, Ishmaelites, and Tachiks are named after him. Isaac wed Rebecca when he was 40, and she conceived when he was 60....

Abraham died when Isaac was 76 years old. When Jacob was 15 years of age Isaac was 180, this being the 31st year of Levi. At this time Abimele'k' was king of the Chaldeans. He is Gerera of the Phillistines, a friend of Abraham's house. When Jacob was 77 years old, in the 137th year of Isaac, he went to Harran with his father's blessing. Jacob was 147 years of age in the 12th year of Kahag and died 232 years after the time that God had promised to give his sons their portion of the world. He came to Egypt at 17. Now Esau took a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites and when he knew [g26] that this did not please his father, he married Ishmael's daughter Margaye't'

**[120]** In was in this period that Muhammad [c. 570-632] [g293], son of Abdullah, appeared in [the city of] At'rape' (Yathrib/Medina) in Arabia. Arabia extended in the north from the Euphrates River to the sea in the south, and in the west from the Red Sea east to the Persian Sea. Its inhabitants are called Ishmaelites, after Ishmael; Saracens, after Sarah; Hagarenes, after Hagar; and Madianites, after Kendura's son, Madan. This Muhammad arose from the city of Medina and, involved in commerce, travelled from Palestine to Egypt. [There] he became acquainted with an Arian cenobite who brought him to a belief in God through his sermons. [In Palestine] he became acquainted with Jews who taught him their laws, and he believed in God. Then [Muhammad] went and preached to his own clan. Some of them he convinced, but others chased him away, regarding him as a fanatic. He arose and went with his supporters into the desert. He enslaved and ruined those who would not submit. Many [folk] adhered to him and they went on expeditions to areas of Palestine, capturing and bringing back [their booty]. They became rich, and their army grew larger. [Muhammad's] renown spread. The Jews united with him and gave him a woman of their people. The Jews liked him and took him with them, and, using him, they harassed the Persian troops. And [the Arabs] harassed the Persians and ruled over many lands. [Muhammad] first appeared in the 12th year [g294] of Heraclius [622], in 933 of the Syrian Era [622], and in 60 [or, 67] of the Armenian Era [611, 618]. In this period there was a half eclipse of the sun which lasted from the month of Areg in the fall [eighth month] until the month of K'aghots' at the beginning of summer [fifth month]. And people said that the sun would never come out of hiding.

**[124]** In the meantime Heraclius added to his wickedness by marrying his brother's daughter, Martina, in his old age. She gave birth to a son of impiety named Heracleonas.

Muhammad, after ruling over many lands for seven years, died. Muhammad tyrannized over many districts preaching a religion according to his own wishes, and establishing laws as he willed. Then rule of the kingdom was taken by Abu Bakr for two years and five [or, seven] months.

After Abu Bakr, 'Umar ruled. He sent many captives to Arabia [g303]. He took Basra from a Syrian prince, and destroyed numerous cities. ['Umar] sent a large army to Persia and found them in turmoil since some supported Yazdgird [III, 632-651] as king and others supported Ormazd. Eventually Ormazd was slain and Yazdgird reigned. The Arab (Tachik) army, after taking a great deal of booty and prisoners, turned back. On the way home they struck at the Byzantine army and its general Sargis. And they strengthened against both Byzantium and Persia, and became a great power.

Heraclius sent his brother Theodoricus against the Arabs. The latter came to the Antioch country, to the village called Ko'sit. Now it happened that there was a stylite named Simeon dwelling there who belonged to the Chalcedonian sect. Theodoricus and his princes paid him a

visit. [Simeon] said: "Vow to me that when you return triumphantly, you will eliminate those who do not accept the Council of Chalcedon, and I will believe that God will grant you the victory." They so vowed to him, and added: "Indeed, we have such an order from the emperor, to ruin and kill such people." Now one of the princes who was very Orthodox became greatly saddened at this, since he realized that the wrath of God was about to descend on them. Indeed, [Theodoricus' troops] set off full of swagger and when the wrath of God struck them only a few managed to flee. The remainder fell to the Arabs' swords [g304]. [The Arabs] also seized all their [war] materiel. The emperor's brother escaped by a hairsbreadth and, out of shame, did not dare to meet anyone's eye. Once again Heraclius massed troops and put them under a military commander named Sklaros. He also brought out Xor'ean's son and sent him against the Arabs with 70,000 troops. They went and fought by the river of Damascus, and the Byzantines were defeated. They lost 40,000 cavalry. Xorean's son managed to go to 'Umar in Hems and said that if he would entrust him with troops, he would go and conquer Persia for him. But it happened that the Persian king Khosrov's daughters were there among the captives and said [to 'Umar]: "This man is the son of a rebel. He will go and destroy your troops and reign in opposition to you. Do not trust him." Umar believed them and sent and had him killed, crucified on a cross. After this he took Damascus [g305] and its surrounding districts and cities and resided there. And he became extremely powerful.

[125] In that period the Arab general Sad arose from Yathrib and pitched his camp over the city of K'ubar. Yazdgird, king of Persia, heard about this and arrived and encamped opposite him on the Euphrates. In the fierce battle which ensued, the Arabs conquered the Persians and chased them as far as Ctesiphon. Now the Persians were many in number and armed, while the Arabs were few and unarmed. Indeed, it happened that there was one Persian prince who was heavily armed who went fleeing before a naked and unsaddled Arab horseman. Many times [the Iranian] turned around and shot arrows [aiming] at the [Arab's] heart, but none of them hit the target. Now as he went along the prince espied a hoe lying in the road. As a test, he fired at the hoe, but the arrow missed. Then he realized that it was God [Who was responsible] and he fell from his horse, was killed and robbed by the naked Arab. And some say that the Arab told them: "There was a piece of horseshoe [g306] in my breast pocket, and the arrows struck that ten times and did me no harm." In this time the feast of the martyr Simeon took place, and the celebrants assembled there. The Arabs learned about this and went and massacred them. Many [Christians] were confounded and asked: "Why did God betray us?" But they were unaware that they had broken the rules established by the ancient celebrants who prepared for the day by fasting and with tears of faith. Today, however, it was done with eating and drunkenness, with other sinful carryings on, which displease God and lead to sin and personal ruin.."

[126] Umar then went to Egypt. Bishop Cyrus (Kawra) came before him promising to give him 2,000 dahekans annually if he would not enter Egypt. Umar agreed to this, and so he turned back. Heraclius was furious at this, removed Cyrus from the episcopacy, exiled him, and sent a

military commander—an ostikan (prefect) of Armenian nationality named Manuel—to hold the country. When the [Arab] tax-collectors came to collect the tax, [Manuel] said: "I am not Cyrus, who would give you gold. He had a pilon, what I have is a sword." When 'Umar heard about this he took the Arab forces to Egypt and captured it. Then 'Umar went to Jerusalem. Sophronius, the bishop of Jerusalem, came before him. When he saw that 'Umar [g308] was wearing old clothing, a worn fur, and a worn and coarse sheepskin, he brought him costly clothes and beseeched him to put them on. But ['Umar] replied: "God put into my hands the entire Persian treasury at Ctesiphon, as well as the [treasuries] of the Byzantines, Damascenes, and Egyptians and many others, and still I did not change these clothes of my poverty so that I would not become proud and forget myself." And so saying, he did accept [the clothes] from him. ['Umar] honored the bishop and gave authority over that land to him.

The bishop requested that the Jews be removed from Jerusalem and ['Umar] gave him an edict to that effect. ['Umar] also ordered that a mosque be built on the site of the Temple. Then he went to Syria. There Heraclius' military commander in Edessa, John (Yovhannes'), went to him at Qeneshirin and gave him 100,000 dahekans, the taxes for one year, to prevent him from invading eastern Mesopotamia. Now when Heraclius heard about this he was furious and ordered that John be put into fetters. For God, Who had willed the loss of the land from [Heraclius], gave him over to bitter and imperious ideas. This was the reason that when the next year arrived [g309], the Arabs came and entered Mesopotamia, took and ruled it. When he went to Edessa, the clergy affectionately came out to meet him. In their wisdom they removed the Byzantine military which was there. [The Byzantine troops] departed peacefully. Thus the Arabs came to rule over Mesopotamia. But [the cities of] T'lmo'z and Dara did not submit peacefully and were taken by force, and the troops in them were broken. And in that year [the Muslims] put a head tax on all the Christians under their rule.

In that year Heraclius died [A.D. 641], having reigned for thirty years and five months. His son, Constantine, then ruled for four months. Now Heraclius had three sons: Constantine, Heracleonas, and the youngest, Heracles. Heraclius' wife, Martina, killed Constantine with poison and enthroned her own son, the young Heracleonas. But the nobles were displeased with this and killed Heracleonas, and then enthroned Constantine's son, Constans, grandson of Heraclius.

'Umar [634-644], after his triumph over the Persians [g310] and the Byzantines, was slain by one of his servants. [This man] had beseeched ['Umar] for a decision [on some matter] on which ['Umar] had demurred. And so, one day when 'Umar was at prayer, [this servant] killed him with a dagger. ['Umar] died after reigning for 12 years.

[127] Following this, 'Uthman took power. Then they bestowed the dignity [of caliph] on 'Uthman [A.D. 644-656]. He was a greedy and cruel person who went beyond all his

predecessors in this respect. The princes thought to kill him. They warned him to stay in line. 'Uthman learned about this and begged them to forgive him, [promising to] remain within the bounds set by his predecessors. And they left him alone. They designated Mu'awiya as military commander. Mu'awiya came with his troops to Caesarea Stratonean [Caesarea Palestina], taking it and destroying the Byzantines there, and putting it under taxation. From there he proceeded to Amasia. After taking much booty, he turned to Cilicia and subjugated it. Then in the fifth year of Constantinianus, he looted the country and departed. Emperor Constans [II, 641-668] massed troops, dividing them into two parts. One he entrusted to an Armenian named David [Sahar'uni] who chased the Hagarenes out of Cappadocia, and the other [g311] to Valentinianus (Vaghin). [The latter] went via Cilicia and was slain by the Arabs who had come to subdue Cilicia. They appeared before him and wasted the Byzantines, leaving a few to flee. David went to the upper lands and the troops who were with him were in no way less active in robbing the Christians, taking gold, silver, and [precious] clothing. They [even] disgraced women in front of their men. Someone went to David and said: "Why do you let your troops work such evil? What answer will you give before God?" [David] became furious with the Byzantine [troops], saying: "Here is the reason for the ruination of the Christians for there is nothing to differentiate our deeds and lewdness from those of the unbelievers." He took [the troops] and returned to Constantinople not wanting to lead such troops.

In that period the patrician Grigor rebelled in Africa. The Arabs suddenly entered Africa, and took and enslaved it. Grigor, having submitted [g312], went to Constantinople.

In the same period, at Mu'awiya's order, 1,700 ships assembled in Egypt. He took them and went to the island of Cyprus where he demanded taxes from them in exchange for which he would spare them. But [the people] had fortified themselves in their cities and did not want to give [taxes]. Those fortified cities of theirs became their cemeteries. The sword of Hagar fell upon them and a very great multitude were killed. Then [Mu'awiya] went to the city of Constantia, which was the capital of the island, full of people and treasure. He besieged and then destroyed the city, filling it with blood and thoroughly looting it. He also committed abominations in their cathedral church, which had been built by Saint Epiphanius, because they did not hold to the Orthodox faith practised by Epiphanius or to the canons he established or to his works. After filling up with an incredibly large amount of booty, the Hagarene troops (or, Mu'awiya) gave a portion of it to those who had come from Egypt, and then sent them back to their own country.

**[132]** In the year 966 of the Syrian Era [A.D. 655], which is 93 of the Armenian Era [A.D. 644], 37 of the Arab tyranny [A.H. 37 = 659], the 10th year of Constans, and the 9th year of 'Uthman, the military commander Mu'awiya ordered that an enormous fleet of ships be assembled at Tripoli to sail to Constantinople. Among the overseers were two soldiers who were sons of believers. They removed all the Frank slaves with them, killed the other troops, and set



fire to all the ships. They themselves who were of Frankish nationality then boarded a boat and headed for Rome. When Mu'awiya learned about this he was furious, and had more ships than before readied. He organized the troops and entrusted them to the command of Abu'l Hawar (Blghur) to go to Constantinople. When Emperor Constans [II] heard about this, he assembled as many troops and ships as he could come to Acre (Aka) in Phoenicia [to Mt. Phoenix in Lycia] [g321] by land and by sea. His brother Theodosius came by sea with a multitude of ships. As soon as the Hagarenes learned about this, they brought their ships against them. On the evening before the battle, Emperor Constans awoke from sleep and summoned an interpreter of dreams and told him: "In a dream I saw myself in Thessalonika at a feast." The interpreter of dreams replied: "Would that you had not slept and not had such a dream, for 'Thessalonika' signifies victory for the other side." The emperor scorned his words and became angry, and the man was silent. The next day, an enormous battle took place at sea, and intensified until the air was filled with dust, as though the fighting were on land. Constans was defeated and barely escaped with a few men. The number slain who were found by the shore was 23,000 men. The Hagarenes wanted to go on to Constantinople, but at the emperor's command, prince Ptolemy came to Mu'awiya and agreed to pay taxes if he would not go to Constantinople. He was lying about it, however. The Hagarenes therefore departed for the country of Syria. Mu'awiya agreed and withdrew.

But Constans broke his oath, and did not send [the tribute] he had promised. Therefore the Hagarenes went and raided Syria. Ptolemy then brought taxes for three years and his son Grigor as a hostage, and then left, and thereby removed them from the country.

Now Constans, fearing for his reign [g322], slew his own brother, Theodosius, and became so hated by everyone (by the troops) that he went off to Rome. They called him back from Rome to Constantinople. Leaving Rome he came to Syracuse, a place he liked. From there he summoned his sons Constantine, Tiberius, and Heraclius. However the troops would not let them go. Rather, they designated them Caesars and kept them in Constantinople. As for the emperor, he did not dare to quit Syracuse, for he had heard that they were calling him a second Cain, for murdering his brother.

**[136]** In this period 'Abd al-Malik's son Maslama ruled as king in the Qeneshirin country which is Aleppo. In the 19th year of his reign, 'Abd al-Malik sent Maslama (Mslim) against Mopsuestia and took it [g330].

In the same year Justinian got out of prison, after ten years' confinement. He went to the king of the Khazars, the Qaqan (Khaqan/Khagan). The latter received him with the greatest joy and gave him his daughter in marriage. With support from the Bulgars, [Justinian] came to Constantinople. Apsimar fled. [Justinian] killed Leontius, destroyed many at court, exiled others, and generally emptied the court. He located 6,000 Arab captives, and freed them to go home in

peace. Then he sent many troops to fetch his wife, but they drowned in the sea. When the Qaqan learned about this he was devastated, and sent [a message] blaming [Justinian], which said: "Fool, why did you send such a mass of troops for your wife. Did you think that I wanted to prevent [her from joining you]? Send just a few and take her." When Justinian heard this, he was very happy and [g331] sent and had his wife and son Tiberius brought to him.

In 1015 of the Syrian Era [A.D. 704], which is 152 of the Armenian Era [A.D. 703], Maslama (Mslim) rebuilt Mopsuestia, expanding it with high and secure walls, and he placed troops there to resist the Byzantines. In the same year 'Abd al-Malik died and Walid ruled for nine years and five months [al-Walid I, 705-715]. It was in this period that Justinian persecuted the Armenian people within his realm (or, from his realm) by means of Philippicus. The Arabs received them happily (the Arabs request them and settled them) in Melitene and Mesopotamia. And there was a great strengthening of the Orthodox [Monophysites] in Syria against the Diophysites [Chalcedonians]. They built monasteries, retreats, and Armenian villages which exist to this day.

The impious Muhammad had stirred up fierce persecution among the Arab faithful [Christian Arabs]. [Muslims] seized [g332] the [Arab Christian] leader and tortured him with various torments because of his faith until they killed him. His body was left there for thirty days, but it did not decay nor did birds or animals approach it and Muhammad was shamed. A very great number of Christians suffered martyrs' death for the name of Christ, but [Muhammad] killed them mercilessly.

In this same period Maslama went to the Cappadocia country and 40,000 Byzantine cavalry were killed from Justinian's army, not to mention those who were taken prisoner. They captured the city of Tyana (To'na). Then Maslama, after taking Darand, came into Cilicia where he captured Djerdjoum and Podanta among many other cities. Henceforth there were Arab troops at Darand. Now Philippicus, who had grown powerful, killed Justinian and his son Tiberias and he himself ruled [Philippicus, Bardanes 711-713]. In these same days there was issued a decree by al-Walid that Christians should be taken into churches and killed if they did not apostasize their faith. A countless number of Christians died as a result of that order. Philippicus, who was versed in Scripture as well as in secular knowledge, scorned the [decisions of the] Sixth Council, and the heresy of Maximius, and tried to have them anathematized, but those who were seeped in that heresy did not allow it and [the emperor] failed because of the stubbornness and arrogance of his supporters. In this same period [g333] Maslama took Amasia as well as Antioch in Pisidia.

[139] In this period a man by the name of Severus, an Assyrian, who used magic began to preach among the Jews: "I am the Christos. Gather your belongings so that I may prepare an army and go and rule as king in Jerusalem." And they believed in him and gathered up much treasure. When 'Umar learned about this he summoned him, seized the accumulated treasure, and then let him go. As a result of this, 'Umar made it law that the testimony of Christians should not



be admitted, nor should Christians ride on saddled animals. And should an Arab [Muslim] kill a Christian he would not die as a result, but could pay a blood price of 1,000 [or, 5,000] drams. ['Umar] also made the clerics free from taxation so that they not give all their belongings to the court. Moreover, he made it law that Arabs should not drink wine.

When ['Umar II] died, Yazid [II, 720-724] ruled for four years. Now it happened that a man who also was named Yazid rebelled against him in Her. He attracted many followers. But Caliph Yazid sent and had him killed. In this period many lands became depopulated because of famine which resulted from the coming of locusts. Now Yazid sent [orders] throughout all the lands that images should be obliterated in the churches, [removed] from clothing, books, monuments, and all [other] goods [g337]. Leo, emperor of the Byzantines, similarly effaced [images] from the Byzantine churches. There was dissatisfaction with him from many folk who were greatly displeased. He stirred up persecution against all the races of humanity who did not accept his profession [of the faith]. Many Jews were baptized and became Christians, some were killed, while others fled. Then Yazid died, and Hisham [724-743] ruled for 19 years. He was a wicked and greedy man, an oppressor and tax gouger who made the country long for death. He dug a canal above Callinicos which took water from the Euphrates and irrigated the plains. He went to Neocaesarea on the Gayl [Wolf] River and captured it, and in the same year [the Arabs] took the impregnable fortress called Shize' in the Cilicia country.

In this period Severus was the patriarch of the Syrians at Antioch and Yovhanne's [III, Odznets'i, 717-728], the Philosopher, was the patriarch of the Armenians. In places such as Vaspurakan, Sasun, Aghuania, and Siwnik' the Jacobite Syrians held the same confession [as the Armenians, i.e., Monophysitism] based on apostolic foundations.

[151] The patrician Manuel rebelled from Theophilus, came to Mamun, and urged him to invade Byzantine territory. When he went to Harran he ended the demolition of the churches. Then he went on to Edessa and made inquiry about the revenues of the cathedral there. When he was told that they paid taxes to the Arabs, he issued an order that the Church should not pay taxes on any of its holdings, and should pay nothing to the court. In summer Mamun went to Cappadocia, captured four strongholds there and then turned back to winter in Damascus. In April of the following year he again returned to Byzantine territory. He descended to the fortress of Lulu; however, unable to take it by siege, he turned to Kesoun. Patriarch Dionysius came out before him, and [Mamun] treated him with great honor giving him a document freeing the Church [from taxation]. Now it happened that while he was speaking with the patriarch they brought him the glad tiding of the capture of Lulu by the troops he had left [g366] at the fortress. And so he felt even more affection for the patriarch.

In this period the patrician Manuel left Mamun and went to Theophilus. Theophilus sent to Mamun, requesting friendship, to which Mamun replied: "Pay taxes to me and acknowledge me

as king over you, and I will establish friendship with you." Then Theophilus made him no further reply. Now Mamun went to Cilicia, and a certain Byzantine came to him claiming that he was the emperor's son. Mamun believed him and gave him a crown costing 3,000 dahekans, and told the patriarch of Antioch, Job, to consecrate him emperor according to Christian custom. And this was done. When this was discovered in Constantinople, they anathematized Job. This imposter lived two years among those Arabs and no one bothered with him. Then he apostasized Christ and became a Muslim (tachkats'aw).

Mamun went to Byzantine territory and through kindly deceit subdued the entire land as far as the city of Tyana, which the Arabs had demolished. And he started to [re]build it through taxes demanded from the country so harshly that every tongue cursed him. This reached the ears of the Lord of Power, and thus God struck him and he died. Then his brother al-Mu'tasim (Abu Sahak) ruled [A.D. 833-842]. He burned the building of the city [g367] and all its arrangements, then proceeded on to Baghdad which he subdued by force—even though they were not with him. Subsequently he went to Basra. Men had come to him from there with complaints, saying that There is an island called Banat, which had always rebelled and was causing great grief, because [the islanders were wont to] kill the merchants who travelled [from Basra] to Ethiopia and India. That island was located in the sea at a place opposite from where the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers join, in the Persian Sea. The caliph sent troops against it but was unable to take it because of the fastness of the place, the ingenuity of the people, and the bravery of the soldiers. And so, the caliph sent to Egypt and Saba and had brought from those places craftsmen and skilled divers who covered their sense organs with the foetuses of children and poured oil into jars with which [devices] they were able to descend and later emerge from the sea. Now [the caliph] had sent [the divers] along with the troops so that when the inhabitants of the island came forth in boats to fight with the Arab boats, they would suddenly enter the city and burn it. And this is just what they did. The rebels were destroyed, the fortress was demolished to its foundations and great ease came upon the merchants and travellers while the land of Basra expanded and was greatly built up.

**[161]** In the Bible, the prophet Ezekiel says about [the Turks] that Gog and Magog, [who are] the princes of Tubal (T'ovbel) and Mosokh (R'osmosek') will threaten the Jewish people and destroy Jerusalem. On three occasions the prophet mentions [the tribes of] Gog and the destruction they will bring. If we search in detail, we learn that indeed there were three times that they arose. The first took place during the time of the Persian king Cambyses son of Cyrus, whom some style the second Nebuchadnezzar. He hired troops from the Turks and defeated the king of the Assyrians. Then he sent them under Holophernes, who was one of them, to Palestine. Now after the conclusion of the battle he led them back [to their own territory], and they took back with them [as booty] all the good things of the land: gold, silver, valuable clothing, and fruit. After [Cambyses], others of the Persian kings brought [the Turks] forth as auxiliaries, from [the time of] the Macedonians to the Sasanians. Each time [after the battles], they would be taken

back, with valuables. And thus, there arose in them a desire to emerge from there [permanently], if there was a chance. This took place 510 years before the birth of Christ. Here is how it came about [g389].

Once when the Turks were being led back to their own country as usual, when they got near the gate since their escort was small, they turned on the Persians who were leading them and killed them. They seized a fortress which they retained and made more secure. Then they notified their kinfolk and a group of them arose to help them, and seized other fortresses, placing the gate under their own command. Then they notified some of their distant people, who were their princes and the wealthiest of them. After that, multitudes of them who had been behind the gate started to come forth frequently. Having accomplished this, they again fortified the gate, arose and came to the Aral (Aragh) country in the land of the Persians, close to the land of the Persians. Now they say that a white animal, like a dog, led them on. That dog led them to the [next] gate and behold, the gate was open and they passed through. Whenever they started to stray, that animal would bark loudly at them until they came back to him. They worshipped it. And [the dog] led them from their own land to the Aral. Then it left them and vanished from sight.

There were three divisions [of Turks]. They cast lots, throwing three sticks into the air. One [stick] fell to the south, and so one division of them went south toward India and mingled with [the Indians]. A second lot fell to the northwest, and so the middle division went west to Thrace and dwelled there, calling themselves Komans/Cumans after the name of the land. The third lot fell in the middle country [g390] and the third detachment came and mixed with the Persians. Afterwards, many others arose. Then they closed the gate again. There were 70 chiefs among them who had come to the Aral. They placed 70 princes in a circle which they traced on the ground. Each [of the 70] held a wand [or stick] in hand, and it was stipulated that when they threw their wands into the air, whoever's wand fell inside the circle [which was the target], that chief would rule as king. They threw the sticks. Nine fell shy of the target, but one of them landed within it and, moreover, was driven into the ground. And so they established nine kingdoms there, eight of which submitted to the one who's wand had stood in the ground. They are well established there and hold the gate. Now [the Turks] ruled below two mountains called the Breasts of the World, and they likewise ruled many lands beyond those mountains. They always call their leader Qaqan since that was the name of the first king. Group after group came forth. Since many of them mingled with Arabs, they were styled Muslims after them and [particularly] after the [general named] Mslim, the leader of the troops who went against Constantinople. They especially cleaved to them since both the Tachiks and they confessed one God [g391]. [The Turks also] learned from them not to worship created beings. As a result, they hate the Cross and the Church.

[162] These people [the Turks] wherever they go adhere to the religion [practised] there. Those who went south to India mixed in with the idol worshippers and became idol worshippers. Those who went to the south and west mixed with the Christians and became Christians.

The Armenians and Georgians also, in times past, used to call forth [Turks] as auxiliaries via the other Gate. These folk became Christians. The [people] called Qipchaq—to use the Georgian word—are from these [converts]. In their own language "valley" is *xit*, and "vessel/pan" is *ch'ax*, [and thus, Qipchaq] means that they are locked up as in the neck of a vessel and poured out of it as needed.

The first emergence [of Turks] was during the time of Cambyses, as mentioned. The second was under the Tachik (Arab) kings when they came to Palestine, and as John of Asia states: "There were 4,000 Turks with Abu Ishaq ("Sahak") when he took the city of Amorium." As for the third [emergence of the Turks], it is still in the future, close to the end of the world. As the prophet Ezekiel laments, three times will they come [g392] into the land of the Jews, corrupting the world as far as Palestine. And it is also said and John of Asia says further that when Emperor Tiberius [A.D. 14-37] sent envoys to them—as did Justin [I, 518-528] and Heraclius [I, 610-641]—the Qaqan wept upon seeing them. When they asked what occasioned his tears, he replied: "There is among us a sort of prophecy passed down from our ancestors which I heard from my fathers which says that when the kings of the Romans subdue the Turks with gifts and bribes, the end of the world is close at hand." The Qaqan asked: "Do you Romans pay taxes to the Persians or not?" They replied: "On the contrary. The Persians pay taxes to the Romans, for Trajan put taxes on the Persians." John [of Asia] also says this. The Qaqan was astonished that the Roman empire was so large. Now the envoys which went to them did not go there by traversing through their own country, but rather to the Qaqan residing by the gate near Mt. Caucasus as the ambassadors of Justinian and Heraclius narrated via the gate in the territory beyond Maragha. [The Persian shah] Shapuh had sent 5,000 virgins to the Qaqan who resides in a large area outside their own native land. The name of the land is Aragh, and they extend to T'etalia which is called Turk'astan. It is to this place that the amir Mahmut led the captives to Khorasan. From this people there ruled as sultans Tughril-Beg (Doghlabak') [1055-1063], followed by Alp-Arslan (Albasan) [1063-1072]. Now they always style their king, "Qaqan." But they have their own laws in their land, having left aside cannibalism which had been practised there. Let us here resume our previous narration.

[164] In that year a certain prince Comnenus rose up and seized the kingdom. Michael escaped, shaved his head and entered a monastery. Comnenus [Isaac I, Comnenus, 1057-1059] then ruled for two years. He was followed by Ducas [Constantine X, Ducas, 1059-1067] from the Paphlagonia country who grew stronger against the Turks, built a wall for Melitene, and, after reigning for nine years, died.

In this year Tughril's military commander K'sisari [? Salar-Khorasan] came to Aleppo and took it. This was the start of the taking of cities in deep Assyrian Mesopotamia, from Damascus [g396] to Aleppo, and from the far side of the Euphrates to the sea of Adrianople, which is Cilicia. Tughril's military commander went as far as the sea of Pontus.

In these days Satan inspired the patriarch of Constantinople to do a deed loathsome to man and angels alike. He had the writings and holy oil of the Orthodox Armenians and Syrians burned and trampled under foot. They did not respect even the bread and chrism of communion. He had Patriarch Athanasius and 25 bishops summoned to Constantinople. However, before they departed the wrath of God descended and that godless insulter of Christ died as did Arius. His replacement as patriarch held an investigation into the faith and angrily and heatedly denounced them. The Greeks were defeated by the Holy Spirit. The blessed Athanasius became furious and anathematized them. Furthermore they were exiled to the island of Chios. But at the empress' order they returned to their own places he returned to his [patriarchal] throne.

Now after Ducas, Romanus Diogenes [Romanus IV, Diogenes, 1068-1071] ruled [g397]. In this period died the sultan of the Turks, Tughril, whom they [also] call Do'lghabak, and Alp-Arslan became sultan. [He] came in person among the Armenians and Byzantines. He subdued them and took Shamshute'. Then he went on to Ani which he took with 100,000 men. There he killed 1,000 men in a ditch and bathed in their blood. Then he turned to Naxjawan. Diogenes gathered countless troops and went against them. [The Byzantine emperor] came to Kars and burned down an Armenian church and he swore that if he defeated the Turks, he would either completely exterminate the Armenians or convert them to his [Chalcedonian] faith. The Lord heard him, but did not help him. The Byzantines were defeated by Alp-Arslan and [Emperor] Diogenes was seized. When this was learned in Constantinople, they enthroned Michael [VII, 1068-1071]. Then Diogenes got free of Alp-Arslan through oaths and entreaties and wanted to go to Constantinople. However, [the Byzantines] blinded him and, on Michael's order, they killed him.

Then Alp-Arslan sent his sister's son, Sulaiman, who came and took the land of the Armenians and ruled as king. Then there were two sultans, one over the Byzantines and Armenians, and another in Khorasan, of Turkish nationality. Sulaiman arrived and suddenly entered Antioch at night, seizing it. And he turned the senior church of Saint Peter into a mosque.

In this period an emir pious, prayer-loving, and kind by the name of Danishman arose among the Turks, came and entered the Cappadocia country, came to Cappadocia with his troops at Alp-Arslan's order. He seized Sewast and Caesarea. He took Sewast and Caesarea, ruled them, and grew great. This was the beginning of the House of Danishmand [g398]. For this was his

name. Earlier they had been taken captive among the T'etalik', learned the laws of the Tachiks and thereafter believed in Islam. They became fervent in the faith.

[165] The history of the taking of Cilicia by the Armenians starts here. When these developments were unfolding, some 50 Armenians who had been harassed by the Turks went and dwelled in deserted areas. They armed themselves and harmed the Turks, beat the Turks, and took from them things they needed. They came to the Marash country and found there a man of their own Armenian nationality named Philaretus. He was a personable and attractive man. He became their leader and they entered the Cilician country. At that time the Turks were ruling there. [The Armenians] took a fortress from them and made it more secure. Then they took the entire country with its cities and fortresses as well as many lands around Cilicia—Marash, Kesoun, Ablastan, and Gargar, Melitene and Edessa on the other side of the Euphrates, and many other places. The Turks were frightened of him. The Byzantines learned about this and gave gifts to Philaretus, styling him sebastos. Afterwards, Turks from all over gathered against Philaretus and took half his lands. Then he went to Baghdad, to the caliph and, for the territory, he weakened in the faith [converted to Islam]. He received [from the caliph] a document saying he should retake the lands. Before he had returned, they had taken the remainder of [his] lands and did not return it. They say that [Philaretus] regretted [his conversion to Islam] and returned to his own faith and, in repentance, shaved his head and entered a monastery [g399].

Now in this period when the Turks were growing strong, the Arabs—who were called Tachiks after one Tayyi, a glorious and wise prince of theirs—submitted to them. The Turks and Tachiks mingled together and became one people and were called by the same name [Tachiks]. Now they left alone the prince in Baghdad who was called caliph and was of the line of Muhammad. He received honor from the Tachiks and Turks and they received their faith and honor from him. And they revered him as though he were Muhammad himself. By writing and through oath, both peoples submitted to him, promising to take their faith and orders from him. From then on it was by order of the sultan in Khorasan and the caliph that those deemed worthy received the honor of emir. Then [the Turks] came and ruled over lands and districts. And thus, in this way, there came to the Armenian areas an emir named Sukman who was of Turkish nationality, and they called him "Shahi Armen" which means "King of the Armenians." Then a certain emir came from Mesopotamia. He was also a Turk, named Artuk, and they were called Artukids.

[166] Now the emperor of the Greeks Michael [VII, Parapinaces, 1071-1078] was weak and a womanizer and had no interest in war. He was afraid of the Turks. He sat around eating and drinking. Then there arose against him [g400] Nicephorus [III, Botaniates, 1080-1081] who came to Constantinople with his troops, took the city, and began to destroy it. Then Michael took the crown in his hand, went before him, and said: "Take this [crown] which you are seeking and stop using your sword against the Christians." And [Nicephorus] took the crown. He ordered that [Michael's] hair be cut off and that he be taken to a monastery. And he took the emperor's wife as

his own wife, and also castrated [Michael's] two sons. As a result, everyone loathed him. This displeased the court and they hated him. Consequently, one of the princes, named Alexius, took his many supporters and seized the empire. Alexius did to Nicephorus what the latter had done to Michael. Alexius [I, Comnenus, 1081-1118] ruled over the Byzantines for 29 years.

At the start of his reign, Alp-Arslan took Damascus and killed Ak'sis.

In that same year, some counts among the Romans assembled numerous troops and came to Constantinople [g401] and besieged it for seven years. The reason for their emergence was as follows. When the emir Artuk captured Jerusalem at the command of Malik-Shah, he placed the [Church of the] Sepulcher under taxation so that they would collect one red [ducat] from each person praying there. At that time one of the counts of the Franks named [Raymond de] Saint-Gilles (Znjil) had come to Jerusalem to worship at the places [held by] the infidels. When he entered the Sepulcher, they demanded from him more than the stipulated tax. In this time, when the Turks ruled Jerusalem and the entire seacoast, a prince named Saint-Gilles came to Jerusalem to pray. They took a dahekan from him as they did from all pilgrims. But then they demanded more. Now when he refused, [the Muslims] struck him such a strong blow that one of his eyes fell out. The prince took that eye and put it in his pocket, took it to Rome, and went around to all the counts and moved them to zeal for the Lord. They arose and first came to Constantinople. While they were besieging Constantinople, an earthquake occurred at Antioch [ca. 1092]. The wall fell down and a tower completely collapsed down to its foundations. There they found many [g402] bronze statues which seemed to resemble images of Franks in their clothing, mounted on horses and bound with iron chains.

The emir had [the statues] brought before him and then investigated what they might be. Some said that they were idols from ancient times, and he commanded that the statues be broken into small pieces, and this was done. An old and blind woman heard about it and said: "Those statues are talismans made by the Greeks using magical means to prevent the Franks from getting powerful, becoming kings, and crossing over the sea to us here."

You can tell from the iron chains which hold them bound. When the emir heard this, he was greatly saddened by the destruction of the statues. And at this same time [the Franks] took Constantinople, crossed over here, grew stronger, and came to Antioch by ship.

**[179]** In 1466 of the Syrian Era [A. D. 1155], Masud's son, Kilij-Arslan, came to rule [Kilij-Arslan II, 1155-1192]. He had two brothers. One he had secretly strangled he killed him using poison, while the other fled to the seacoast and holed up in a fortress his father had given him prior to his death. His name was Shahanshah and was a son-in-law of the House of Danishmend. Because of this, they were united and his cousin (father's brother's son) Yaqub-Arslan laid waste the country of Kilij-Arslan. When Nur ad-Din, lord of Aleppo and



Damascus heard about this, he took P'arzman and Ant'ap'. Then Yaqub-Arslan sent to Nur ad-Din and to Qara-Arslan, lord of Kharberd (Xart'berd), so that they would take all of Kilij-Arslan's lands located on their borders in Mesopotamia and on the far side of the Euphrates River. However, in planning [g430] the seizure and division of the territory, they argued with one another and abandoned [the idea].

Now the Tachiks [Arabs] had held Egypt under their sway since the days of the Muslims' [conquest], and the Turkish kings were unable to find an entrance. The Turks were unable to rule there. Their [Egyptian] caliph descended from the line of 'Ali, just as [the caliph] residing in Baghdad descended from the line of Muhammad.

[198] And thus was Nur ad-Din inflated with pridefulness in Damascus, where a countless multitude of cavalry assembled near him from all parts. And then, suddenly, he received a blow from the Lord and died, having reigned for 28 (or, 29) years. His son, Melik Saleh, took power, while the troops dispersed to their own places. The king of Jerusalem [g474] [Amaury/Amalric] came against Damascus and captured the land. The Damascenes promised to pay him taxes as before if he would leave, but he did not want to turn back until he had taken the city. However, the sins of the Christians did not allow this to happen, for a fatal illness struck him. He took the taxes from Damascus and went to Acre where he died, after ruling for 12 years. This was 40 days after Nur ad-Din's death. And then there was sorrow among all Christians at his death. His fifteen-year-old son Balwin became king in his place and sent to make friendship with Nur ad-Din's son. Now it happened that when Kilij-Arslan heard about Nur ad-Din's death, he came to Sebastia and took it along with Komana and Neocaesarea, and exterminated the remaining line of Danishmend. Thus was the rule of the House of Danishmend ended. [Danishmendid rule] had begun in 1366 of the Syrian Era [A.D. 1055] and continued for 122 years [uninterruptedly] with six of their leaders ruling one after the other. Similarly, Nur ad-Din's brother, Sayf ad-Din Ghazi (Sep'adin) emerged from Mosul and took Nisibis, Ragha, and Harran and his brother's sons in Aleppo submitted to him. His brother's son Melik Saleh submitted to him. [Sayf ad-Din] returned [to Mosul] and removed the remaining edicts of Nur ad-Din which he had written on all the mosques [saying] that Muslims, Turks and Tachiks (Arabs) must not drink wine. [Sayf ad-Din] ordered that the inscriptions should be chiselled out and [g475] he allowed all areas to freely and openly drink, including in the mosques should anyone want to.

**Source: Robert Bedrosian [tr.], [\*The Chronicle of Michael the Great \(A.D. 1126-1199\)\*](#), [\*Patriarch of the Syrians\*](#), Sources of the Armenian Tradition, Long Branch, N.J., 2013.**